2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

The girls of Dragalevtsy had no way of proposing to a boy. The girl waited and, if nobody proposed to her, she remained unmarried.

Sometimes unmarried young people had sexual intercourse. If the boy did not want to marry the girl, then she told her parents; the boy was brought before the *Obshtina* and, if the charge was proved, was made to marry the girl. As one peasant said in matchless understatement: "In such cases they do not have a happy life."

One such case occurred during my sojourn in the village and was an exciting topic of conversation. A girl with an unsavory reputation, in the hope of gaining a certain young man as a husband, accused him of having had intimate relations with her; the parents, too, insisted upon his marrying their daughter. He refused and the matter was taken up before the village court, where several of his friends swore that they likewise had had intimate relations with the same girl. Whether the friends swore truthfully or falsely was still a matter of doubt in the minds of many villagers, but the young man was freed from all responsibility in the matter.

Chastity ranked high in the scale of village social values. Even though some couples had illicit relationships before they married, they were running a grave social risk. Public indignation was especially great in the case of illegitimacy. A girl giving birth to an illegitimate child was forced to leave the village. On this subject I had the following conversation with one of the more respected villagers:

"Where does the girl go if she is driven out of the village?"

"She goes to Sofia because she's a bad girl."

"Do the villagers try to find out who the father was and punish him for his part?"

"The father? Why should they? The girl is to blame, not the man."

"Are many illegitimate children born in the near-by villages?"

"In my time [the last thirty-five years] there have been two in Bistritsa, one in Dragalevtsy, and none in Simeonovo."

There was no particular stigma attached to being a widow or a widower, but the village mores decreed that, when remarrying, widows had to choose widowers, and vice versa. The explanation for this went back to the villagers' belief of the afterlife. They thought of

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

[562] 178 593 were willing to grant that the changes introduced by the young people were a part of the times and might not be so bad after all. In talking to these older women I noted a touch of envy, which I would not have suspected ten years ago.

In contrast to these changes many phases of the family system remained the same. These included the attitude of intolerance towards a childless couple, the role of the mother-in-law in the caring for infants, the parents' preference for boys, the reserve between father and the children, the continued dwelling of many married sons with their fathers, and the importance attached to being an older brother or sister in the family. The godparent relationship and the attitude towards the *svatovstvo* (in-law relationships) were still of major importance.

[848] The moral standards remained relatively rigid, with continuing intolerance toward illegitimacy. The one such case within the past ten years[1] had caused a great amount of unfavorable comment. The mother resolved her predicament by leaving her child with relatives in the village and marrying in another place.

178 183 Many other traditional practices besides those related to the family still maintained their strong grip on the people. The Christmas Horo took place as always and the Sunday afternoon promenade had become more firmly established. The *babi* (older women) were called in whenever illness or childbirth occurred. The smaller families, of course, numbered fewer children these days, but the *babi* were kept just as busy since the state-employed midwife no longer worked for the Obshtina. The dead were buried much the same as formerly, although the priest forbade people to cry messages to the dead while the funeral procession paused at the crossroads on the way from the home to the church.

[527] The people still made much of the mice and wolf holidays. One day after St. Dimiter's Day (November 9) the peasants continued to fast to keep the mice from coming in and eating up not only stored food but even clothes and other prized possessions. Bai Yurdan, the tailor, told me in all seriousness, "When I was in Sofia I didn't observe such holidays but now that I am back in the village I must."

[1] [i.e. 1935 - 1945 -- Analyst]